



Workplace Telepressure and Workaholism: ICT Boundary Creation as a Potential Moderator

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Workaholism

Workaholism is the compulsive need to work incessantly (Oates, 1971). It has been linked with harmful effects such as burnout and physical complaints (Andreassen et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2016). Overall, workaholism has adverse relationships at individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels (Clark et al., 2016). Workaholics believe they have low family communication and problem-solving abilities (Robinson & Post, 1997). In addition, they report more marital estrangement, and female workaholics are less likely to get married (Doerfler & Kammer, 1986; Robinson et al., 2001). Workaholics also have higher levels of work stress and lower mental health (Ackerley, 1988; Clark et al., 2016). They experience more sleep problems, such as sleeping fewer hours, having poor quality sleep, and feeling tired in the morning (Salanova et al., 2016). Regarding personality, workaholism is positively correlated with openness and conscientiousness (Jackson et al., 2016).

Workplace Telepressure

Workplace telepressure is the preoccupation with and urge to respond to work-related messages through information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Barber et al., 2019; Grawitch et al., 2018). The association between workplace telepressure and other beneficial workplace constructs is negative. Workplace telepressure can affect employees both behaviorally and cognitively (Hu et al., 2019). Moreover, it is negatively related to work-life balance (Barber et al., 2019). One study showed the positive association between burnout, work-family conflict, and ICT availability is mediated by workplace telepressure (Kao et al., 2020).

Another construct that is positively related to burnout and work-family conflict is psychological detachment—the lack of thinking about work itself and work events (Santuzzi & Barber, 2018). Some studies have shown a lack of psychological detachment can be the reason why workplace telepressure relates to detrimental outcomes (Barber et al., 2019). Hence, workplace telepressure could explain why those with high levels of ICT availability experience burnout and work-family conflict.

ICT Boundary Creation

While information and communication technologies (ICT) help employees have more control over their response times, they also contribute to blurring one's boundaries between work and home life. ICT boundary creations are the restrictions we set for ourselves by using ICTs for work (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Furthermore, ICT boundary crossing is when a worker disregards or has no self-imposed restrictions leading to ICT use outside of working hours (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015).

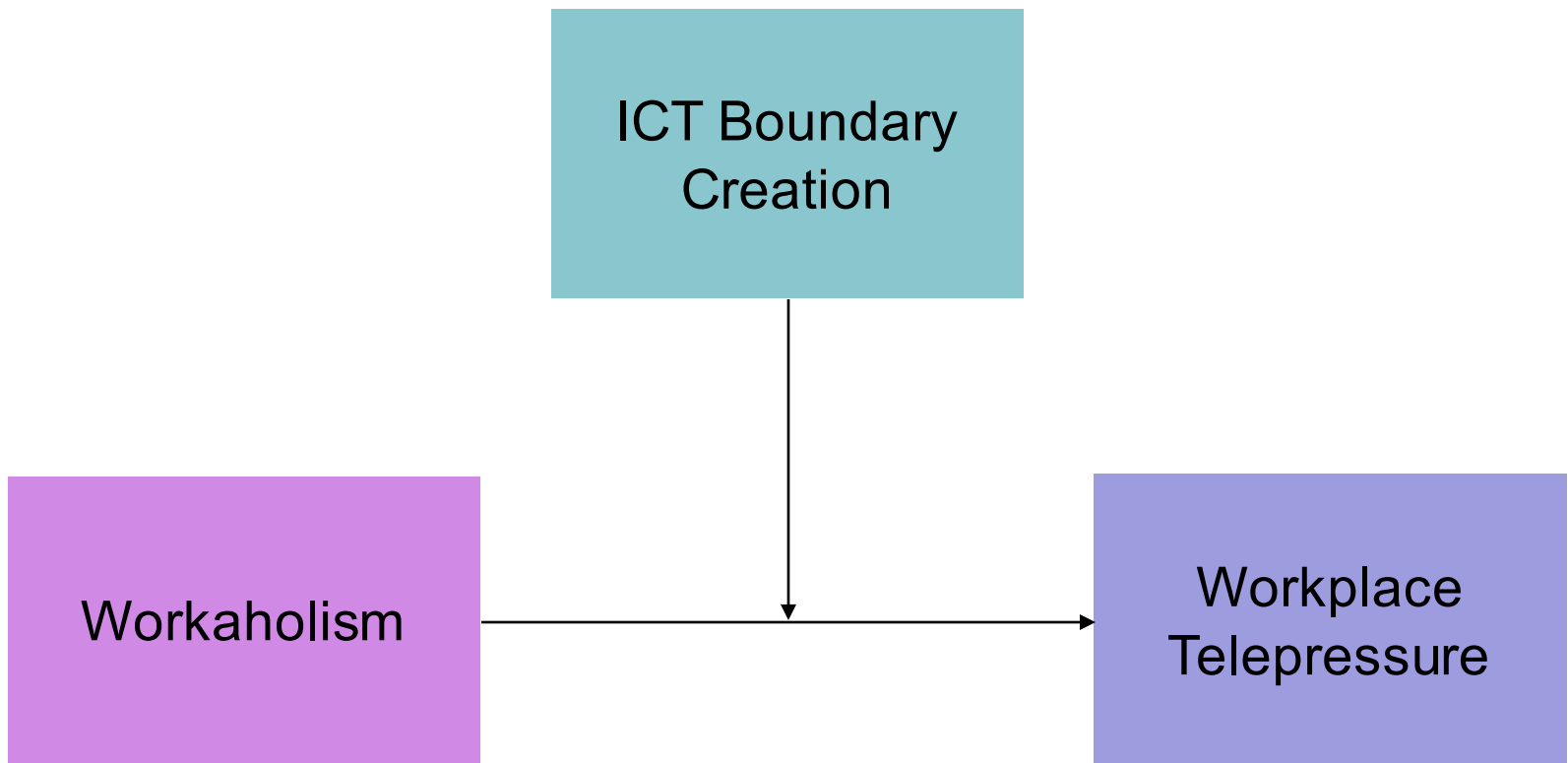
With the recent increase of ICT use due to COVID-19, the ability to separate and disconnect from work has become even more challenging for workers. If employees do not create some form of separation from work, they may face negative consequences, such as having a harder time psychologically detaching from work and lower sleep quality (Barber & Jenkins, 2013). Overall, ICT boundaries are beneficial and prevent employees from being negatively affected as a result of *not* disconnecting from work.

Abstract

In our proposed study, we will examine the relationship between workaholism and workplace telepressure, as well as test ICT boundary creation as a potential moderator. A work-related construct with comparable negative influences as workaholism (e.g., physical exhaustion, burnout, sleep problems, and poor work-life balance; Barber et al., 2019; Kao et al., 2020; Santuzzi & Barber, 2018) is workplace telepressure. ICT boundary creation will be tested as a moderator because it could be part of a solution to minimize the negative effects affiliated with workaholism and workplace telepressure (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). If significant results are found, organizations could alter their policies to promote separating work and personal life, thereby lowering harmful consequences associated with both workplace telepressure and workaholism.

Conceptual Model

Figure 1.



Hypotheses

Clark's (2000) work/family boundary theory helps to provide some of the empirical reasoning behind the questions outlined below. According to work/family boundary theory, one's work and personal life are separate domains that individuals integrate and segregate (Clark, 2000). As a result, one can integrate and have blurred boundaries, or segregate and have more established boundaries.

Question one asks, "How do workaholism, workplace telepressure, and ICT Boundary Creation relate to one another?" The following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Workaholism will be positively related to workplace telepressure.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): ICT boundary creation will be negatively related to workplace telepressure.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): ICT boundary creation will be negatively related to workaholism.

Question two asks, "How does ICT boundary creation moderate the relationship between workaholism and workplace telepressure?" The following hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): ICT boundary creation will moderate the relationship between workaholism and workplace telepressure, such that the greater the level of ICT boundary creation, the weaker the relationship between workaholism and workplace telepressure (see Figure 1).

Method

Participants

Participants will consist of full-time employees (i.e., faculty and staff members) at a large Southeastern university. They will be recruited through an online email distribution service.

Procedure

The study will be submitted to the university's Institutional Review Board and Survey Review and Oversight Committee for review and approval. The survey will be developed in Qualtrics. After providing informed consent, participants will be prompted to provide demographic information. They will also be assessed on measures of workaholism, workplace telepressure, and ICT boundary creation.

Measures

Multidimensional Workaholism Scale. The 16-item MWS (Clark et al., 2020) will be used to measure workaholism. The scale is composed of four subscales: motivational, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Items will be answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*). A sample item is "I always have an inner pressure inside of me that drives me to work." The higher the participants' total score (i.e., sum of all items) on the MWS, the higher their level of workaholism.

Workplace Telepressure Measure. A 6-item scale (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015) will measure workplace telepressure. Each item will be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is "I can't stop thinking about a work-related message until I've responded." The higher the participants' total score (i.e., sum of all items), the higher their level of workplace telepressure.

ICT Boundary Creation Measure. The 10-item ICT BCM (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006) will be used to measure ICT boundary creation. The BCM is composed of two subscales—home domain (time spent not working for pay) and work domain (time spent working for pay). Items will be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item from the work domain is "While I am working, I limit the amount of time I use ICTs for personal/family purposes." Higher total scores (i.e., sum of all items) represent having more ICT boundary creation.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations) will be collected to describe the study sample. Correlations between workaholism, workplace telepressure, and ICT boundary creation will also be computed.

The first question will be answered using the aforementioned correlations. Next, the potential moderating influence of ICT boundary creation on the relationship between workaholism and workplace telepressure will be tested with a multiple regression analysis. We will first examine the main effect of workaholism and ICT boundary creation, followed by their interaction (Workaholism X ICT Boundary Creation). Furthermore, if their interaction proves to be statistically significant, Hayes' PROCESS (2014) will be utilized to determine the potential moderating influence of ICT boundary creation on the association between workaholism and workplace telepressure.



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